

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of recovering microbial cells in a bioleaching process comprising:
 - a. subjecting a metal-containing slurry produced in a bioleaching plant to a solid/liquid separation process to form a supernatant that includes a metal in solution and microbial cells; and
 - b. ~~extracting~~ separating the microbial cells from the supernatant resulting liquid, ~~wherein the microbial cells are extracted using one a technique selected from the group consisting of a continuous centrifugal process, a batch centrifugal process, a continuous concentration process that includes concentrating the cells by subjecting the resulting liquid to a membrane filtration process wherein the cells are accumulated onto an inner surface of the membrane and are then removed by back flushing or washing.~~
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the microbial cells are separated from the metal in solution ~~in the resulting liquid~~.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the microbial cells are ~~extracted~~ separated using a plurality of separation stages ~~extraction phases~~, which are operated in series.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the bioleaching plant includes a plurality of bioleaching reactors connected in series,
5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~4~~ 4 further comprising recycling the microbial cells to at least one bioleaching reactor.
6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the ~~extracted~~ separated cells.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising packaging the ~~extracted~~ separated cells.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising freeze-drying the ~~extracted~~ separated cells.
9. (Canceled)
10. (Canceled)
11. (Canceled)
12. (Canceled)
13. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the separation is conducted using one of a continuous centrifugal process or a batch centrifugal process.
14. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the separation is conducted by subjecting the supernatant to a membrane filtration process wherein the cells are accumulated onto an inner surface of the membrane and are then removed by back flushing or washing.